

MICHIGAN REGIONAL SKILLS ALLIANCES  
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

**DEADLINE: 2:00 P.M., July 9, 2004**

**WHAT ARE MICHIGAN'S REGIONAL SKILLS ALLIANCES?** Michigan's Regional Skills Alliances (MiRSAs) are locally-managed partnerships formed to address workforce issues affecting firms operating in the same industry in a distinct geographic area. Among the challenges the MiRSAs set out to resolve are worker shortages, skill shortages, training mismatches, employee recruitment and retention, and organizational design. Key features of MiRSA's include:

- MiRSAs seek to resolve systemic and structural problems by working at a multi-firm, industry-based level.
- MiRSAs are regional in nature and reflect the local labor market. Participating firms draw on a regional labor pool of people who live and work in the region. ("Regional" refers to the geography of labor markets. At a minimum, MiRSA's should cover a county.)
- Employers who participate in such alliances tend to see the business climate as friendly and supportive, an important consideration in location decisions.
- MiRSAs engage all appropriate public and private stakeholders in collaborative problem-solving.
- These stakeholders are brought together by a **convener**, an organization that is acting in part as an organizer but is also a partner with expertise in the issue area.
- Industry sectors in which MiRSAs are formed are a significant part of the local economy, but they need not be the principal industry of the area.

The State of Michigan's objective for the MiRSA initiative is to assist local areas in developing industry-based partnerships that will promote the economic health and welfare of areas' businesses and workers. Michigan intends to stimulate and support the development of regional skill alliances with the overall goal of providing Michigan employers with a highly skilled workforce and Michigan citizens with careers with good wages and opportunity. Firms that continually upgrade the skills of their employees are more likely to remain competitive and healthy than those that do not. As industries in a region prosper, they tend to attract suppliers who benefit from the proximity to their customers and similar businesses that benefit from the availability of skilled workers.

- MiRSAs will focus on the needs of a single industry within a region and multiple employers in that industry;
- Conveners of the MiRSA will be key players in the community who have a role in solving the workforce needs in the industry and a role in addressing the need for good jobs by community residents;
- MiRSAs will focus on the workers or potential workers at the lower wage end of the industry and work to improve opportunities in those jobs as well as in jobs at higher levels in the career ladder; and
- MiRSAs will achieve systemic changes in the industry and workforce that have mutually beneficial results for employers, workers, and the community.

**BACKGROUND** Economic change is occurring at an ever-increasing pace. Globalization of the economy, rapid technological change, and changes in labor force demographics are among the major factors affecting businesses and workers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Many employers find it difficult to remain competitive. They may face a number of human resource problems such as replacing an aging workforce, finding entry-level workers with the required skills and knowledge, providing training to their current workers, retaining high-quality employees, and adopting new workplace practices.

In a rapidly changing economy, workers, too, face similar problems. Workers with “good” jobs are not guaranteed to have such jobs for life. They must continue to acquire and maintain the skills desired by employers. Individuals with lower incomes and perhaps less consistent engagement in the workforce may need to find jobs with promotion potential in order to improve their income and living standards. Every person in the labor force needs to have accurate and relevant information in order to make good decisions on training choices and job opportunities.

MiRSAs can help respond to these critical economic realities. They can act to identify and define specific needs of employers and workers in a more accurate and timely manner. Once the needs are identified, they can serve as a forum for reaching agreement on the appropriate response to those needs. And finally, the MiRSA can monitor the responses as they are implemented and coordinate any adjustments that may become necessary over time.

**HOW DO MiRSAs WORK?** MiRSAs are noteworthy in that they combine expertise in multiple fields. In-depth knowledge of a particular industry, its structure and workforce trends, is melded with a substantial knowledge of area labor market trends and techniques for assisting targeted populations of currently employed, unemployed, or underemployed workers. Activities undertaken by MiRSAs often include examining, designing, and implementing improvements to the sector’s human resource practices including, but not limited to, employee recruitment, development of career ladders, and training and mentoring. Other activities may include revising and rationalizing training curricula, addressing non-workplace issues such as transportation and other supportive services, and improving supplier relationships.

MiRSAs are driven by the employers within the industry and include partners representing multiple employers, as well as others such as organized labor, economic development agencies, workforce boards, community colleges, universities, business associations, chambers of commerce, and other groups. Organized around a core goal of meeting employers’ workforce skill needs, MiRSAs develop strategies to address human resources needs of the industry. MiRSAs are public/private partnerships which support job creation, career development, education, and training in regionally important industries or sectors.

Conveners of the MiRSA should be key players in the community who have a role in solving the workforce needs in the industry and address the need for good jobs by community residents. MiRSAs should focus on the workers or potential workers at the lower wage end of the industry and work to improve opportunities to create career ladders in those jobs as well as in jobs at higher levels. MiRSAs should achieve systemic changes in the industry and workforce that have mutually beneficial results for employers, workers, and the community.

**WHAT IS AVAILABLE?** To stimulate and support the initial development of MiRSAs, the State of Michigan, with the assistance of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, has made available \$1,050,000 for the development of 12 Regional Skill Alliances. The State of Michigan is not

expecting to award over \$100,000 for any single grant. Grants are for the first year of the MiRSA. (MiRSAs are expected to exist for at least a three-year period.) In addition to grant funds, limited technical assistance will be provided to successful bidders to assist in project implementation. All grants will be required to show a match that includes both cash and/or in-kind contributions. Support from employers is required.

**WHAT IS THE GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS?** Applicants must complete the attached application form. All applications are to be single spaced, in 12pt. font. All applications must be no more than 25 pages, excluding required attachments. All applications must provide the following:

**1. Applicant Information:** Applicants can be any organization selected by the partners. This includes, but is not limited to, community colleges, universities, Workforce Boards, labor unions, labor management collaboratives, chambers of commerce, private training providers and business associations. Individual employers may apply only on behalf of a group of employers.

All applicants are expected to demonstrate that leading a MiRSA is a core element of their current mission. It is crucial that principal stakeholders actively participate in development of the project plan prior to submission of the application. After the grant period, the state expects MiRSAs to be self-sustaining. Applicants are urged to consider plans and resources available to support activities beyond the life of the state grant.

Applicants must provide letters, from all partners, signed by an authorized official agreeing to the role of the applicant as the grantee, as well as identifying in-kind and cash resources to be provided.

**2. Industry:** MiRSAs focus on the needs in a single industry and multiple employers in the industry within a specific labor market area (LMA) or collection of LMAs. Applicants must identify the industry of focus and demonstrate that the industry contributes significantly to the local economy. The industry need not be a prime growth industry, but must account for a significant share of local economic activity and employment.

An application must demonstrate that the specific industry contributes significantly to the local economy. The industry may be one of the tri-corridor industries identified by the state - advanced manufacturing, life sciences, or homeland security. The industry could also be one facing skill shortages, such as health care. An industry of local importance may also be selected. In either case, documentation must be provided to show how the industry affects the local economy and workforce.

***The State will provide assistance in obtaining regional labor market information for industries selected by applicants. Some information is available at [www.michigan.gov/rsa](http://www.michigan.gov/rsa). Additional assistance may be requested by emailing [Imi@michigan.org](mailto:Imi@michigan.org).***

*Regional Profiles for Industry Targeting* are for informational purposes only. Grant applicants are encouraged to select MiRSA boundaries that are economically integrated regions reflecting workforce availability. Grant proposals may reflect regions and

industries not captured in the profiles.

**3. Employer Involvement** By their nature, MiRSAs deal with skill needs across multiple firms. Applicants must define the universe of employers in the relevant regional sector and the specific firms that will be involved in the MiRSA. Selection criteria will favor applicants that address a higher number of employers and workers. Applicants are to:

- Describe the process used to obtain employer input during the application's development.
- Describe what proportion of local employers in the industry were involved in the application development. If not all, why not?
- For a MiRSA to succeed, it must be focused on meeting employer needs. The proposal should describe how employers are involved in the MiRSA.

**4. Other Required Partners** In addition to employers, MiRSAs must include other principal stakeholders positioned to contribute to addressing the challenges facing the region and industry. Key partners will depend on the industry structure and geographic area to be covered. Each partnership will be expected to include appropriate partner organizations representing economic development; community colleges, business associations, the public workforce system, training and education providers, and organized labor, if applicable. All of the partners should participate in the application development.

Applicants must show that relevant partners are included in the proposal and have committed to participation. The proposal must identify all partners in the MiRSA and other affiliated organizations; how they are appropriate to address the identified problems and potential solutions; and how the partners are involved in project implementation.

**5. Problem Statement** The application must clearly articulate a problem or set of problems affecting the regional industry which the MiRSA will address. The statement must be logical, coherent, and appropriate to the work objectives proposed. Along with the problem statement, the applicant must describe the system change that the MiRSA will seek to create or achieve: How will things be different if the project is successful?

**6. Skill Need(s)** The application must demonstrate that the targeted industry has a human resource - workforce need that can be addressed through a MiRSA. Occupational areas must provide workers with economic self-sufficiency. Data will demonstrate the need for training that is not being met through existing institutions/relationships. Current employment patterns and likely future employment opportunities must be included. Information from employers must be submitted to supplement any secondary data used to identify a need for MiRSA activity in a region/sector. All information must be timely, and projected future needs must include an appropriate timeframe that is relevant to the MiRSA's planned operational period (i.e., projections should identify needs over a one- to three- or five-year period).

**7. Outcomes** Applicants must show how they will measure the impact on businesses and workers and system changes that improves the ability of people to gain employment. Outcomes must support the following state goals and objectives:

- MiRSAs increase the employers use of and participation in the public workforce development system

- MiRSAs are seen by employers as an integral part of the community and the success of their businesses and the industry
- MiRSAs provide solutions for entry level through senior level workforce needs
- MiRSAs are completely supported by local public and private funds

Applicants must describe how achievement of these outcomes will be tracked during the life of the MiRSA.

**8. Management Summary and Work Plan** The proposal must describe how the Applicant plans to address the objectives described above in this RFP. It must also include a detailed work plan identifying the tasks, processes and milestones to be accomplished by the project, including planned starting and completion dates.

- Does the proposal clearly outline the tasks to be accomplished to meet the objectives of the RFP?
- Does the work plan provide sufficient detail regarding when and how specific tasks will be accomplished?
- Is there sufficient evidence of partner support and buy-in?
- Will the tasks as proposed result in the deliverables described in the RFP?

The application must also describe activities planned to occur following expiration of the grant award. In particular, activities that are begun during the grant but concluded after the end of year one must be described, as well as other planned processes and activities directly related to achievement of the MiRSA's goals responding to the issue(s) identified in the problem statement. This post-grant information must be at a sufficient level of detail as to provide evidence of a logical pathway toward resolving the issues identified in the problem statement.

Because leading a MiRSA must be a logical part of an applicant's current mission (refer to #1, Applicant Information, above) grant funds may only be used to supplement staff and other resources already available to the applicant and its partners. Examples of permissible uses include:

- Staffing and other support for MiRSA start-up activities
- Primary research on skill gaps and possible responses, although grantees should avoid duplicating research that can be conducted by the Department's Bureau of Labor Market Information and Strategic Initiatives on behalf of the MiRSA. ***It is expected that grant funds will not be used solely for research and planning activities; proposed activities must include implementation of plans to resolve workforce issues in the identified industry and region.***
- Curriculum development
- Training
- Outreach to prospective workers
- Implementation of operational plans to address regional/industry problems

Funds may not be used to purchase equipment or other capital investments.

For any existing employer-led, industry-based collaborative that applies for MiRSA designation, grants may fund the further development and enhancement of the collaboration, beyond the specific items listed above. The final listing of allowable activities will be consistent with the rules and requirements of the source of those funds.

**9. Capability and Qualifications** The written proposal must indicate the ability of the Applicant to meet the terms of the RFP, especially the time constraints, quality, and prior experience with projects similar to that described in the RFP. The proposal must demonstrate the Applicant's potential for performing the required work, and describe how management of a MiRSA is compatible with the applicant's current mission statement.

**10. Qualified Personnel** The written proposal must provide biographies or resumes that indicate the competence of personnel whom the bidder intends to assign to the project, and of other personnel who will be participating in project activities. Qualifications will be measured by education and experience, with particular reference to experience on projects similar to that described in the RFP. Emphasis will be placed upon the qualifications of the bidder's Project Manager and their dedicated management time, as well as that of other key personnel working on this project.

**11. Budget** Applicants must provide a three (3) year line item budget. Applicants must document cash and in-kind contributions. Applicants' and partner resources are expected to be major contributors to project success. Applicants with higher amounts/ percentages of their budgets covered by non-grant resources will receive relatively higher scores on this selection factor.

Grant funds are meant to jumpstart MiRSA development. The expectation is that existing resources will continue to be available for many tasks related to the project. Applicants are encouraged to apply for funding from other appropriate sources of assistance. Applicants will be expected to request only such funds as may be necessary to supplement available resources for year one of the MiRSA, and to identify additional year(s) resources which will be applied to project costs in year two and beyond.

The budget will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Is the budget adequate to accomplish the tasks proposed?
- Does the budget include cash and/or in-kind contributions from employers and other MiRSA partners?
- Does the proposal demonstrate an intention to pursue increased support from business, industry, labor, education and foundations?
- Are proposed sources of funds beyond the state grant appropriate and realistic?
- Is the budget cost-effective, i.e., are costs reasonable in relation to the outcomes expected?

Applicants must show how their MiRSA will become self-sufficient, including commitments from partners for support in year 2 and beyond.

Several weeks after grant awards are announced, a meeting of all MiRSA grantees is planned for October. It is expected to be two days in duration. Subjects to be covered include grant requirements, the evaluation methodology, technical assistance plans, and additional background on MiRSA development. The project manager and representatives from key partner entities are expected to attend this meeting. If other resources are not available, a reasonable amount of grant funds may be budgeted to support attendance at this event.

**Combining** We encourage all parties to work together on a single application. Instances where multiple applications are received for the same sector/region may result in a request from the state for proposals to be combined.

In some instances, the state may require changes to applications in order to bring them into compliance with the goals of this initiative. There will be a brief period following application review during which some applicants may be encouraged to modify their proposals.

**Evaluation Process** An external evaluator will work with the State and the C.S. Mott Foundation to evaluate the MiRSA initiative over a 24 month period. Applicants must agree to work with the evaluator to develop and implement an evaluation process and participate in reporting requirements during the 24 month period.

**WANT TO LEARN MORE?** Pre-bid workshops will be held in Flint, Detroit, Gaylord, Escanaba, Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids. **All applicants are required to attend.** At the workshops additional applications will be available, and the application process, etc. will be carefully outlined. Regional partners are encouraged to attend sessions together. **Registration is required.**

**May 19, 2004**  
**Flint**

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Career Alliance  
711 N. Saginaw Street  
Flint, MI

**May 20, 2004**  
**Detroit**

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Detroit Regional Chamber  
One Woodward Ave., Suite 1900  
Detroit, MI

**May 24, 2004**  
**Gaylord**

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
M-TEC@Kirtland Community  
College  
60 Livingston Boulevard  
Gaylord, MI

**May 25, 2004**  
**Escanaba**

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
M-TEC@Bay de Noc Community  
College  
2000 North 30<sup>th</sup> Street  
Escanaba, MI

**May 26, 2004**  
**Kalamazoo**

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
M-TEC @Kalamazoo Valley  
Community College  
7107 Elm Valley Drive  
Kalamazoo, MI

**May 27, 2004**  
**Grand Rapids**

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Grand Rapids Community College  
Applied Technology Center  
151 Fountain St. NE  
Grand Rapids, MI

As of May 10, 2004 the RFP and applications will also be available in both MS Word and PDF formats on the Department of Labor and Economic Growth website [www.michigan.gov/rsa](http://www.michigan.gov/rsa).

**WHOM CAN I CONTACT FOR ASSISTANCE?** For any additional questions you may have after the Pre-bid Workshop, please e-mail Lynda Belisle, at [rsa@michigan.org](mailto:rsa@michigan.org). All questions must be received by 2:00 p.m. on June 17, 2004. Only e-mail questions will be accepted. All questions and answers will be posted on the website at [www.michigan.gov/rsa](http://www.michigan.gov/rsa) on an ongoing basis, with the last posting on June 25, 2004.

**WHEN MUST MY APPLICATION AND ATTACHMENTS BE RECEIVED BY THE DEPARTMENT? Completed, properly bound applications and attachments MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE DEPARTMENT'S MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, no later than 2:00 P.M., July 9, 2004. APPLICANTS ARE REQUIRED TO SEND AN ORIGINAL AND 5 COPIES OF THE APPLICATION AND ATTACHMENTS to:**

**Lynda Belisle  
Michigan Economic Development Corporation  
300 N. Washington Square  
Lansing, MI 48913**

**HOW WILL APPLICATIONS BE REVIEWED AND WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?** An interagency review committee will assist in the evaluation of applications. If your project is selected, you will be informed by August 24, 2004.



# MICHIGAN REGIONAL SKILLS ALLIANCES APPLICATION

## APPLICANT(S) INFORMATION

Name of Applicant:	County:
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Address:	Phone:
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Fax:	E-mail Address:
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Contact Person:	Title:
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Federal ID #:	MI Nonprofit #:
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Applicant is:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit Organization	
<input type="checkbox"/> Private Enterprise	
<input type="checkbox"/> Local Unit of Government	
<input type="checkbox"/> Organized Labor	
<input type="checkbox"/> Economic Development Agency	
<input type="checkbox"/> Workforce Board	
<input type="checkbox"/> Post Secondary	
<input type="checkbox"/> Business Association	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	

Industry Focus of MiRSA:
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Regional Area of MiRSA:
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## AUTHORIZED SIGNATORY

Name and Title (Print or Type), Signature and Date

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**PLEASE RESPOND TO ITEM NUMBERS 1 THROUGH 11 AND ATTACH TO THE APPLICATION**

1. Demonstrate how leading a MiRSA is a core element of the applicant's current mission. Include description of how the principal stakeholders actively participated in the development of the project plan prior to submission of the application. Be sure to include letters from all partners that are signed by their president, agreeing to the role of the applicant as the grantee and identifying in-kind and cash resources provided.
2. Identify the industry focus and document how this industry contributes significantly to the local economy and workforce. The industry need not be a prime growth industry, but must account for a significant share of local economic activity and employment.
3. Define the universe of employers in the MiRSA. Describe the process used to obtain employer input during the application's development. Describe what proportion of local employers in the industry were involved in the application development and how many employees are represented. Describe how employers are involved in the MiRSA.
4. Describe the key partners in the application, how they are appropriate to address the identified problems and potential solutions, and how the partners are involved in project implementation. Key partners will depend on industry structure and geographic area to be covered. Each partnership will be expected to include appropriate partner organizations representing: the industry, economic development, public workforce system, training and education providers; and organized labor (if applicable).
5. Provide a clearly articulated statement of the problem or sets of problems affecting the regional industry which the MiRSA will address. The statement should be logical, coherent, and appropriate to the work objectives proposed. Provide a description of the system change that the MiRSA will seek to create or achieve: How will things be different if the project is successful?
6. Demonstrate that the targeted industry has a human resources-workforce need that can be addressed through a MiRSA. Occupational areas must provide workers with economic self-sufficiency. Current employment patterns and likely future employment opportunities must be included. Information from employers must be submitted to supplement any secondary data used to identify a need for MiRSA activity in a region/sector. All information should be timely and projected future needs must include an appropriate time frame that is relevant to the MiRSA's planned operational period.
7. Provide measurable outcomes for the impact on businesses and workers and system changes that improves that ability of people to gain employment. Outcomes must support the state's goals and objectives as outlined in the RFP.

8. Describe how the objectives in the RFP will be addressed. The description must include a detailed work plan identifying the tasks, processes and milestones to be accomplished by the project, including planned starting and completion dates.
9. Provide a description of the applicant's ability to meet the terms of the RFP, especially the time constraints, quality, and prior experience with projects similar to that described in the RFP.
10. Provide biographies or resumes of personnel whom the applicant intends to assign to the project, and of other personnel who will be participating in project activities.
11. Provide a three (3) year line item budget that includes all sources and uses of funds. Applicants will be expected to show how their MiRSA will become self-sufficient, including commitments from partners for support.

## **QUESTIONS POST PRE-BID WORKSHOPS**

For any additional questions you may have after the pre-bid workshops, please e-mail Lynda Belisle, at [rsa@michigan.org](mailto:rsa@michigan.org). All questions must be received by 2:00 p.m. on June 17, 2004. Only e-mail questions will be accepted. All questions and answers will be posted on the website at [www.michigan.gov/rsa](http://www.michigan.gov/rsa) on an ongoing basis with the last posting on June 25, 2004.

## **APPLICATION AND ATTACHMENTS DEADLINE**

Completed, properly bound applications and attachments **MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE DEPARTMENT'S MICHIGAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**, no later than 2:00 P.M., July 9, 2004. **APPLICANTS ARE REQUIRED TO SEND AN ORIGINAL AND 5 COPIES OF THE APPLICATION AND ATTACHMENTS to:**

Lynda Belisle  
Michigan Economic Development Corporation  
300 N. Washington Square  
Lansing, MI 48913

**If any information requested in the application is missing or incomplete, the application will not meet threshold criteria.**